

Washington, DC -- Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution sponsored by Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) honoring women's suffragist Martha Coffin Wright on the 200th anniversary of her birth and induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

"This weekend Martha Coffin Wright was recognized in Seneca Falls for her tremendous courage and leadership in a movement for equality and justice," **said Arcuri**. "Martha Coffin Wright was one of the organizers of the first Women's Rights Convention and an active abolitionist who opened her Auburn home to the Underground Railroad. Today, the House of Representatives honored not only Martha Coffin Wright, but all of the men and women who joined together in Seneca Falls and truly changed history."

Martha Coffin Wright, along with her sister Lucretia Coffin Mott and activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton were three of the original five organizers of the First Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. This historic convention produced the "Declaration of Sentiments," modeled on the Declaration of Independence, which for the first time publicly demanded equal rights and suffrage for women.

Martha Coffin Wright participated in many subsequent women's rights conventions in various capacities, often serving as president. She was an active member of the abolition movement, and with her sister Lucretia attended the founding meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia in 1833. She later presided over many anti-slavery meetings and opened her Auburn, New York home to the Underground Railroad.

Martha Coffin Wright was formally inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame during a ceremony, which Arcuri attended, on Sunday, October 7, 2007 at the New York State Chiropractic College.

Arcuri spoke on the floor of the House of Representatives today in support of House Resolution 588, recognizing Martha Coffin Wright. A copy of Arcuri's remarks is attached below:

U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24)
In the House of Representatives

**House Resolution 588 – Recognizing Martha Coffin Wright
October 9, 2007**

M. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of suffragette and abolitionist Martha Coffin Wright.

Martha Coffin was born in Massachusetts on Christmas Day 1806, the youngest child of Thomas and Anna Coffin. After her father's death from typhus in 1815, Martha's mother assumed the responsibilities of the family's business, setting an example of an independent, self-reliant woman that would shape Martha's views about the role of women in society.

In 1824, Martha Coffin married Peter Pelham. Soon the couple moved to a frontier fort in Florida, where Martha would give birth to her first daughter. Tragically, Peter died two years later in 1826, leaving Martha a nineteen-year-old widow with an infant child. To support herself and her daughter, she moved to Auburn, New York to teach painting and writing at a Quaker school for girls. Soon after relocating to Auburn, she met and married a law student named David Wright, with whom she would have six more children.

In July 1848, Martha's older sister Lucretia Coffin Mott, a prominent Quaker preacher, visited Martha's home in Auburn. During that visit, Martha, Lucretia, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton met to plan the Seneca Falls Convention, at which sixty-eight women and thirty-two men would sign the Declaration of Sentiments. This revolutionary document, modeled on the Declaration of Independence, stated that all men and women are created equal. It would be another seventy-two years before the Nineteenth Amendment gave American women the right to vote.

In the years following the Seneca Falls Convention, Martha Coffin Wright was also active in the abolition movement. With her sister Lucretia, she attended the founding meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia in 1833, and later presided over numerous anti-slavery meetings, including two in Upstate New York in early 1861 that were disrupted by angry anti-abolitionist mobs. Martha bravely opened her home in Auburn to the Underground Railroad, where she harbored fugitive slaves.

In 1863, Martha and other women's rights activists formed the Women's National Loyal League to carry petitions for the abolition of slavery, which would finally be achieved in 1865 with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment.

After the Civil War, Martha was also instrumental in the formation of the American Equal Rights Association, which attempted to merge the issues of black suffrage and woman suffrage, and in early 1874 she was elected president of the National Woman Suffrage Association. In December 1874 Martha took ill with typhoid pneumonia and died in Boston on January 4, 1875, at the age of sixty-eight.

M. Speaker, Martha Coffin Wright's dedication and commitment should inspire all of us. I'm proud to represent the region of Upstate New York, where Martha Coffin Wright and countless others fought tirelessly for equal rights for all.

M. Speaker, I am proud to represent the people of Seneca Falls, New York, who established the National Women's Hall of Fame in 1969 to honor the contributions of great American women with a permanent home, and I was honored to attend the induction of Martha Coffin Wright into the Hall of Fame this past weekend.

And I am proud to represent the birthplace of the women's rights movement, the importance of which was recognized by Congress in 1980 with the creation of the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls.

I urge my colleagues to once again join me in honoring the contributions of Martha Coffin Wright and reaffirming the historical significance of Seneca Falls, New York with a vote in favor of House Resolution 588.

Thank you, M. Speaker; I yield back the balance of my time.

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